

October 7, 2013

Dear Mr. Tounget,

I am writing in support of the District 7 single-member district shown on the official 10-1 map draft.

District 7 has come under criticism for representing a gerrymander. I am certain that it is nobody's favorite, running as it does from far north Austin to Lady Bird Lake. It is not what I would have expected.

That said, the district does have one big commonality. It mainly includes areas with balanced age demographics, and growth pressures that, on current trend, will dramatically change those demographics.

The infill growth model we have seen in Austin to date is overwhelmingly targeted to a young singles demographic. VMU-style development, like we are seeing on Burnet Rd, offers mainly efficiency or single-bedroom units, which exclude families with children. Areas along Burnet with these developments are already drawing requests for late-night liquor sales. We've had three around the 5500 block of Burnet since the start of the year.

What Tarrytown, Bryker Woods, Rosedale, the Burnet Rd area, Gracywoods, Walnut Creek and other neighborhoods proposed for District 7 have in common is child-friendliness. These are attractive places to raise families, and for seniors to age in place. These neighborhoods aspire to remain safe and quiet, with good schools, and many long-term residents invested in their communities. All of that can happen while incorporating better transit and achieving walkability near transit. But it will require a different land use strategy than what we have seen so far in downtown, near UT, or even along corridors like E Riverside or Airport. And for most of the district north of 45th, we will need a lot of help getting the infrastructure to support truly walkable places. We will need a council member who can specialize in a different kind of growth.

Again, I am not proposing that the current District 7 is an ideal district. But with all the trade-offs that have to be made, it may be a "second-best" for many of the neighborhoods in it.

Regards,
Steven Zettner
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Sustainable Neighborhoods of North Central Austin